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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1127

INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2270

RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9292

RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7547

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5377

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3705

RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5302

RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0163

RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0136

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4424

RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9853

RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 7142

RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0158

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0005

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/18/2020

TAGS: PGOV PREL PREF PHUM PTER EAID MOPS CE

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: ELECTIONS UPDATE NO. 8

Classified By: AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

ELECTION RELATED VIOLENCE CONTINUES,
THREE ADDITIONAL DEATHS

¶1. (C)(Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) Election-related violence has caused three additional deaths since the last elections update cable from Post (Ref. A). On January 16, a group of unidentified persons opened fire on a van carrying supporters of President Rajapaksa, killing one person and injuring ten, in the town of Chilaw, north of Colombo. On January 17, a group of Fonseka supporters putting up campaign posters was attacked by six persons on motorcycles, with one of the Fonseka supporters killed. On January 18, a grenade was thrown from a passing vehicle at the residence and campaign office of Jayarathna Herath, the Minister of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and also a government supporter. One person was killed and four injured in that attack. This brings the total number of deaths since the beginning of the presidential campaign to four, two on each side of the Fonseka-Rajapaksa rivalry. Other violent incidents have occurred as well, including the stabbing of a local opposition leader in the town of Dambulla by a group of four men, early on January 18. The victim was in intensive care at the Kandy Hospital at last report.

U.S. AND NORWAY ACCUSED OF BRIBES,
POST ISSUES TWO STATEMENTS

¶2. (C)(Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) On January 15, Mohamed Muzammil, a member of parliament from the ultra-nationalist and often anti-American National Freedom Front (NFF), accused Fonseka's campaign of offering him a 30 million rupee bribe (approximately USD 265,000) to end his support of President Rajapaksa and join Fonseka's campaign. Muzammil further alleged that the money for the bribe had been provided to Fonseka's campaign by the U.S. and Norwegian governments. Post issued a statement the next day which reaffirmed our neutral position and "strongly condemned" allegations of

support for one candidate over another. The Norwegian Embassy also issued a statement denying any interference in the election. On Monday, January 18, Ambassador issued a statement through Post's public blog, reiterating the U.S. government's neutrality in the election, and expanding on the importance of this election in Sri Lanka's long, democratic history. In the statement, the Ambassador called for an end to election-related violence and for a free and fair election that allowed Sri Lankans to choose whichever candidate they preferred without risk of violence or intimidation.

ELECTIONS COMMISSIONER GIVES UP ON POLICE

¶3. (C)(Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) Local media reported that the Elections Commissioner had told the political parties on January 12 that he would no longer accept any of their election law violation complaints. He reportedly said the police were not following any of his orders and that government ministers were refusing to comply with his directives aimed at preventing state property and employees from being used in campaign work. He called for a repeal of the election law that bans campaign posters in most locations during the official campaign period.

BUTENIS